

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested.

Claims 1-10 remain in the application. Claims 1 and 3-10 remain in their previously presented form. Claim 2 has been amended into independent form, including all the limitations of previously presented claim 1. This amendment clearly does not present new issues that would require further consideration or searching. Hence, entry of this amendment after final rejection is proper.

Counsel and the applicant are pleased to note that claim 10 has been allowed. Claim 10 remains in the application and has not been amended.

Counsel and the applicant also are pleased to note that claim 2 was identified by the Examiner as being directed to patentable subject matter. The Examiner indicated that claim 2 would be allowed if written in independent form with all the limitations of claim 1.

Claim 2 has been amended into independent form with all the limitations of claim 1. Hence, claim 2 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

The Examiner has concluded that the amendments entered in response to the first Office Action overcame the rejections raised in the first Office Action. However, the Examiner raised a new rejection in the second Office Action and has made that rejection final. In particular, claims 1 and 3-8 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over the previously cited U.S. Patent No. 4,993,967 to Matsumoto considered in view of the newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,910,028 to Tsuji. The Examiner asserted that the Matsumoto connector has a housing A with a front end at the right side of A that is connectable with a mating housing B. The Examiner also asserted that

Matsumoto has a rear end at the left side of A and at least one cavity extending between the ends. The Examiner then asserted that the rear end of the housing A has a pushable portion 5. The Examiner stated that Matsumoto has a slider C with an escape groove 12a and a biasing member 15 between the slider C and the housing A. The Examiner acknowledged that Matsumoto does not disclose the escape groove as being rearwardly open. However, the Examiner turned to the Tsuji reference in an effort to address this admitted deficiency of Matsumoto. The Examiner stated that Tsuji discloses a connector with a housing that is connectable with a mating housing and a slider 30 with an escape groove that is open rearwardly as shown in FIG. 7. Accordingly, the Examiner concluded that it would be obvious to modify Matsumoto to have a rearwardly open escape groove to facilitate smooth insertion as taught by Tsuji.

Reconsideration of the rejection is requested.

The rejection is based on two clear misinterpretations of the references. First, previously presented claim 1 positively recites “a housing having a front end connectable with the mating housing” and a rear end that is “formed to define at least one pushable portion configured for receiving a forward pushing force for connecting the housing with the mating housing.” The rejection states that Matsumoto has a connector comprising a housing A with a front end at the right side of A that is connectable with a mating housing B. The rejection also states that the Matsumoto housing A has a rear end at the left side and a pushable portion 5 at the rear end. However, the right end of the Matsumoto housing A clearly is the rear end of the housing A and cannot possibly be connected to a mating housing. The wires that extend from the housing A would prevent any attempt to connect the housings in a reverse fashion. The skilled artisan

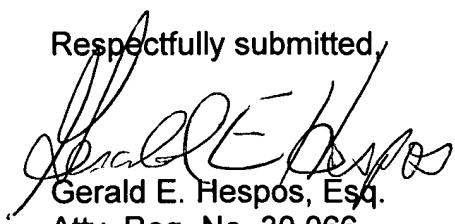
clearly would appreciate this very substantial deficiency of Matsumoto. In view of this deficiency, the skilled artisan would appreciate that the element 5 of Matsumoto cannot possibly be the claimed "pushable portion" at "the rear end of the housing" and being "configured for receiving a forward pushing force for connecting the housing with the mating housing." Any force exerted on the member 5 at the left end of the housing A would only serve to disconnect the housing.

The second misinterpretation relates to the Tsuji reference. Here, the Office Action asserts that Tsuji has a slider 30 with an escaping groove that is rearwardly open as shown in FIG. 7 of Tsuji. FIG. 7 definitely does show a groove. However, the member 30 of Tsuji is mounted in a rear-to-front direction on the housing 11, and hence the groove opens forwardly and not rearwardly as claimed. Furthermore, the element 30 of Tsuji is not at all related to the slider defined in previously presented claim 1 or the slider C of Matsumoto. Rather, as explained at col. 5, lines 38-40, "whether the spacer 30 can be inserted or not allow one to detect whether or not the correct fitted state has been achieved." This is distinct from the combination of a slider and a biasing member that function to separate the housing under certain conditions. Thus, there is no reason for the skilled artisan to combine features of the spacer 30 of Tsuji with the slider C of Matsumoto.

The required combination would require the skilled artisan to ignore the intended function of the spacer 30 of Tsuji and then to completely reconfigure and invert several of the components of both Matsumoto and Tsuji. It is submitted, for these reasons, that previously presented independent claims 1 and 8, and their dependent claims are not obvious over the combination of references relied upon in the final

rejection. Accordingly, all of the claims remaining in the application are believed to be directed to patentable subject matter and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicant's attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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